Rambles and studies in Greece
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TOMB IN THE CERAMICUS (ATHENS). Frontispiece.
RAMBLES AND STUDIES

IN

GREECE.

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"PROLEGOMENA TO ANCIENT HISTORY;"
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ETC.

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In Memoriam

G. W. Bunnell.
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LITERARUM AMOREM
PREFACE.

At the present crisis in the East of Europe, when there seems some hope that a new order of things may be established, and the basis of some better progress attained, it would be unjust to the Greek nation, were this book with its various strictures and complaints to go forth without a clear statement of the other side of the picture. It is very much the fashion of travellers from the great nations to compare the little which the Greeks can do, and have done, with what might have been done with larger resources by other nations; and hence we have constant criticism, and wholesale detraction, of the new Hellas, its government, and its people.

I confess myself not to have been free from this impatience when I travelled in Greece, and that the daily reflection upon what remained un-
done was but too apt to obscure the merits of those who have done what they could, and have done a great deal, for the resuscitation of their country. This feeling appears in many parts of the following sketches. But though it be too outspoken—a fact which I sincerely regret—I have resolved to retract nothing which had been written, because it will show that what I am now about to say on behalf of the modern Greeks is not the advocacy of a partisan, but the admission forced with difficulty from a somewhat adverse critic. I am no enthusiast about the modern, any more than about the ancient, Greeks, as I have elsewhere plainly shown. But common fairness demands that, if we are ready to blame and to advise the Greeks about their internal dissensions in days of peace and quietness, we ought also in days of trouble and agitation—when the rights of neighbour nations are being urged by powerful and partial advocates—to stand forth and declare on behalf of the Greeks their greater promise, and their juster claims.

It is indeed ridiculous to agitate Europe about the rights of Bulgarians and Servians, when the vastly more intelligent, more peaceable, more
civilised Greek subjects of the Porte are suffering under equal oppression, and are harassed with even greater injustice. What have the southern Slavs of Europe to show in comparison with the Greeks? Consider the trade of Smyrna and of Alexandria, of Syra and of Patras; it is due to the enterprise of the Greeks. Consider the education given free at Athens to all who desire it—the numerous schools, the fine university, the archæological and classical periodicals which it produces; and compare all this with Servia! I will say even more—that through the wildest parts of Greece there is an average of education, and of general intelligence, which is not equalled by many parts of the great kingdoms of western Europe.

It is this very intelligence and activity of mind which has often endangered the peaceful development of Greece, and has tended to falsify the estimates of modern Greece among foreign nations. The people find agricultural pursuits not to their taste; they think with the son of Sirach, ‘How can he have wisdom, whose talk is of bullocks?’ On the contrary, trade and politics have for them, as they had for their ancestors, endless attractions. It follows that the agricultural resources of the
country are not developed, while the study of politics has been driven too far.

Both these defects have been greatly aggravated by the miserably narrow boundaries assigned by European politicians to the Greek kingdom. By refusing to include Thessaly and Epirus within the kingdom, the Turkish frontier has been left so near Athens that any criminal or miscreant can escape over the border—still worse, that bands of brigands can reside in Turkey, and carry on their depredations in the neighbourhood of Athens. Nothing has created a stronger and a more lasting prejudice against the Greeks than this matter of brigandage. Yet it is impossible to deny the force of the perpetual and consistent reply of the Greeks, that the Morea, which they are able to control, has been for years perfectly free from all danger, and that the existence of brigandage in northern Greece up to 1870 is simply due to the want of honest co-operation in the Turkish authorities on the frontier. Ever since the appointment of a vigorous governor in Thessaly, even this danger has disappeared. But as the duration of such security depends altogether on the strange accident of the Porte appointing an efficient and